

Lost & Found Center Teaching Series



# **SURVIVING A SPIRITUAL ASSAULT**

## **Introduction**

In our last study we looked at assessing our spiritual defenses by studying the armor of God. In this study we'll focus on surviving a spiritual assault. We'll do this by looking at the spiritual assault that happened to Jesus in the desert. This is important because the way Jesus was attacked in the desert is the same way we're going to be attacked. The enemy will use the same techniques upon us that he used on him. And he's after the very same thing – our authority.

The first thing to understand is that spiritual assaults no matter how they come, are all about one thing – authority.

To set the stage we need to look right before the altercation began. We must first go to the Jordan where Jesus' cousin, John, was baptizing people in the river as a symbol of their repentance.

**As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** Matthew 3:16-17 NIV

So what happened when Jesus got baptized? The Holy Spirit came upon him and God spoke to him. This is critical because it helps us understand who Jesus is in relation to us. Without that understanding we miss the whole point in the desert

The Bible says that Jesus is God in John 1:1 and Hebrews 1:3. However it also says the following:

**...being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** Philippians 2:6-9 NIV

Jesus was God and man as he walked the earth. But in order to wholly represent man, he “**made himself nothing.**” In a sense, he refused to be God on the earth. He became as subject to the laws and restrictions of this universe as if he were just an ordinary man. He had to eat; he had to rest; he could be beaten; he could bleed; and he could die. His goal was to set himself up as an “Adam” in the earth. Adam being the original man that God had created from whom all other men and women came. The Bible says this in comparing Adam with Jesus:

**So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.** 1 Corinthians 15:45 NIV

Adam represents a prototype for mankind. Jesus then represents the new and “last” prototype. See why this is critical? By making himself nothing, he has removed any inherent advantages he would have had over the human race. This gives the altercation in the desert something with teeth. This also means that Jesus understands us at the deepest possible level. That is why the Bible says this:

**For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.** Hebrews 4:15 NIV

Back to the Jordan. When Jesus received the Holy Spirit as a man, he established the new model for humanity. A man or woman with the Holy Spirit is all that is needed in this life to be like Jesus or to be like this new “Adam.” If we could just pause here and drink this in. Peter says it this way:

**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.** 2 Peter 1:3 NIV

We have been equipped with everything we need. The knowledge of this is the power of our lives.

The next thing that happened after Jesus got baptized was he heard the audible voice of God:

**And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** Matthew 3:17 NIV

Jesus heard God declare three things to him: Sonship, love and pleasure. The love from God we would expect to be automatic, because God is love. Our father will always love us. We need to remember it. Count on it. Bank on it. Never doubt it. The pleasure of God is not automatic though and neither should it ever be. Our father may always love us but he is not always pleased with us. Psalm 147:11 is a great verse to remember because it joins both love and pleasure.

**...the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.**

Psalm 147:11 NIV

This verse says the Lord delights or we could say, the Lord takes pleasure in those who revere him and who base their lives on the hope that he will always love them – no matter what. According to the gospels, Jesus hadn’t done much at this point. Had he? But look back at the verse. We never have to do much to please God. He is pleased with us by

simply honoring him as God and by trusting that he will never stop loving us. Is that too much to ask?

He also declared Jesus' sonship. Sonship is another key point that helps us understand the desert experience. When God declared that Jesus was his son, he revealed the next true ruler of everything. He declared the heir to the throne that governs all things. This was a declaration of authority. The closest anyone on earth ever came to such authority was Adam. God declared to the atmosphere that Jesus was his Son. He revealed him to John and all those who were present – whether seen or unseen. God revealed to the enemy who Jesus was.

### **Assault on Authority**

Here's the whole text:

**Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."**

**Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"**

**Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:**

**" 'He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"**

**Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"**

**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."**

**Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"**

**Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him. Matthew 4:1-11 NIV**

### **Re-fighting Adam's Battle**

Jesus had set himself up as an "Adam" in the earth. What we see then in the desert is a re-fighting of the original battle between the enemy and Adam and Eve. What is key to our understanding is that when the enemy attacked Jesus, he's attacking a man. The techniques he used are the ones he uses against men. This is not special for Jesus. This is an assault on man. This is what scripture means when it says:

**No temptation has seized you except what is common to man.**

1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV

**What we all should know**

First of all Jesus knows a few things about the enemy that we should know. He knows he's an enemy of his father. He knows that he is a liar, so he can't trust anything he says. He knows that he wants to destroy him. He knows that this is the same enemy that tried to assassinate him as a baby.

The enemy's goal is authority - to try to get Jesus to act according to his will and not God's. The enemy's goal is to undermine Jesus' authority at worst or take it at best. He uses three techniques. We need to be aware of these techniques for two primary reasons. First, we'll see them in slight variation again and again and again. Second, they are the techniques that rule the world.

Many of us know these.

**For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.**

1 John 2:16 NIV

Regardless of how common this verse is, these techniques still rule in the world and unfortunately still dominate in many churches.

**Funny Thing About Spiritual Assaults**

Remember a spiritual assault is an assault on authority. The goal of surviving a spiritual assault then is to hold onto your authority. And here's the funny thing. If we review what the enemy does and says to Jesus each time, we would see that he doesn't win unless Jesus does something. Isn't that strange? The enemy can't just take authority from man. Remember Adam and Eve. He didn't take it from them either. The enemy may try to intimidate man. He may manhandle Jesus and transport him against his will, but he can't get authority that way. He can't overpower us and take authority. He takes authority by our agreement in opposition to God's will. Without our agreement, we can't lose authority. The enemy has power, but he doesn't have the power to override our will. He needs our agreement. I'll try to make this clear as we walk through his techniques. The techniques are intriguing.

**1. Physical need**

**The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."**

Let's see what's happening here. Jesus had fasted for forty days and nights. He would have needed the Holy Spirit to keep him alive. This is not key to understanding this point, though. The key is that he was hungry. That was the circumstance he was in. This was a circumstance that God had setup. The enemy did not setup this circumstance in the life of Jesus. Neither does he setup all the circumstances in our lives. Please remember this. However, the enemy swoops in to capitalize on the circumstance. He devised an attack on his physical needs. But it is more than about food. He's looking to gain authority.

Notice he said, "**If you are the Son of God.**" That means he had been paying attention. His use of "if" was to introduce doubt, or to unseat what God had just spoken. He tried to weaken faith. Then he made a suggestion that seemed almost reasonable. He was not out of left field was he? He was trying to undermine Jesus' authority. He was trying to get Jesus to take his recommendations. So he made a suggestion that was based upon a real and legitimate need.

Jesus had to decide what would take precedent: physical or spiritual needs. He knew what was at stake but there was a competition in his desire to meet a real and legitimate physical need and to do the will of God. Do you see this? The enemy was trying to leverage a circumstance to use the desires of Jesus' body to override the will of God.

The enemy knows that physical desires can be extremely powerful things. He knows that he has been successful over probably millions of people in which he had gotten them to be completely subservient to physical desires. We have a name for those. We call them addictions whether alcohol, drugs, sex, food etc. Doesn't matter what it is. The goal is always the same – authority.

Jesus with the Holy Spirit responded with the word of God. Remember our spiritual armor. In the spirit realm the word of God is a like a sword.

**Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"**

Thinking in broader terms, Jesus stated that the physical realm would be submitted to the spiritual. Our true life is not about what our body needs but what our spirit needs. See then Jesus in action and see the potential of a person with the Holy Spirit of God. He is the new "Adam." This is our spiritual potential. This is how we will respond someday.

**"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12 NIV**

The Holy Spirit wants to take us to a place where no physical need ever trumps God's will. The intention of this study is not about condemnation but about survival. The goal of this study is consistent with all my studies, to tune our thoughts and then our prayers accordingly.

## **2. Emotional Needs**

**Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:**

**" 'He will command his angels concerning you,  
and they will lift you up in their hands,  
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"**

The appeal to Jesus' physical need wasn't successful. Another reminder. A spiritual assault is only successful if the enemy gets your agreement by getting you to act. So what transpired here? The enemy took a completely different approach, which is also very interesting.

But look at how this verse begins: **"Then the devil took him."** Don't let that slip past you. It is critical. I'm always amazed at that statement. The enemy transported Jesus from the desert to the temple in Jerusalem probably 30 miles away. He made him stand at the highest point of the temple. What a statement of power from the enemy. How could you see this as anything but intimidating? Let's think about this. Has the enemy not overpowered Jesus at this point? Has he not?

When we read this passage, what angle did the enemy use to attempt to undermine Jesus' authority here? What physical benefit would Jesus have gained from jumping? Nothing. What was the enemy doing? He was trying to get Jesus to prove something here. Wasn't he? He was trying to get Jesus to act out of emotion and not the will of God. Some say he was trying to get Jesus to act out of pride. I don't quite see it that way.

Think of it this way. You are sleeping in bed and you are instantly transported to the top the Empire State Building, where you are made to stand on a ledge. You are then taunted by the devil to jump. How could you be feeling anything other than fear and intimidation. Wouldn't you be in a bit of shock and fear for your life? You may even think that the enemy may push you. Jesus might have been very hungry, but at that moment, adrenalin

would have been surging in his veins. His emotions would have been going crazy. Ever been there? The enemy had turned up the pressure. He created the situation. Throw in the fact that the enemy was also taunting him with scripture and things could have gotten a bit confusing.

We must remember, that nothing has changed. He was after the same thing. His power alone could not get him what he desired. He needed agreement. Don't give him agreement and he will not be successful. He wanted Jesus to act out of an emotional need in defiance to the will of God.

Jesus with the Holy Spirit responded again with the word of God. There is no other alternative. There is no other way to survive.

**Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"**

Jesus responded to the extent that he does not need to prove anything. Or in broader terms that there is no emotional need in me that will cause me to act outside the will of God. When we allow our emotions to rule us and to cause us to act, we play into the hands of the enemy. Just like we can't let our physical needs dictate, neither can we let out emotional needs. Our emotional needs can trigger us to compromise our lives. It can even compromise the work of God.

The work of God can never be about proving anything to anybody. If you are doing things to prove yourself, you're not working for God. It seems that so much of the work of God is motivated not by the will of God but the emotions of the worker. People share the gospel out of guilt from their past. People preach strongly against certain sins because those are the very things they struggle with. People pray for the power of God to promote their ministry. People obey God because they think God doesn't love them. People sacrifice out of an emotional need to reach God. The Lord is never looking for sacrifice. He's looking for hearts. Obedience is more important to him than sacrifice.

**Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD ? To obey is better than sacrifice 1 Samuel 15:22 NIV**

### **3. Material Needs**

**Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."**

The enemy hadn't been successful the last two times so he will take still another route. Again "the devil took him" but this time it was not as intimidating as before. This time he enticed him with material things. It was more than just material things here because the enemy was using Jesus' own destiny in an attempt to derail him. He offered him a deal that would yield "**all the kingdoms of the world.**" He'd offered something that resembled Jesus' purpose and future. He'd offering Jesus something he thought was close to Jesus' heart.

Also, if we were unsure this was about authority, the enemy clarified it with the statement: **All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."**

Let's not kid ourselves. All temptations are not created equal. The enemy will package a temptation that looks a lot like your destiny. It is designed to get you to value your future more than the one who holds the future. The enemy will package a temptation that will expose the leanings of our heart. This is what I call a pure assault. Still nothing had changed. The Holy Spirit desires to help us see through it.

I partially quoted 1 Corinthians 10:13 earlier. Let me present the whole verse now:

**No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.** 1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV

Jesus with the Holy Spirit responded once again with the word of God.

**Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"**

In broader terms, just like there is no physical or emotional need that is above the purpose of God, neither is there any material possession - even the rule of the entire world. The spiritual is more important, or of more value than the physical. Jesus said this:

**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** Matthew 6:33 NIV

It drives me crazy to hear this verse distorted. This is not a formula for getting your bills paid. This is not a formula for prospering in this world. If you use this as a formula for prosperity then what is your focus? Is the purpose of seeking the kingdom of God motivated by wealth? If this is the case then your authority has been compromised. Has

the enemy managed to undermine the authority of whole churches or even whole spiritual movements using wealth?

### **Conclusion**

Jesus' experience in the desert shows us how to survive a spiritual assault. If you can excuse the pun, this is not about finding a magic bullet. It is all about using a spiritual sword. There are few points to remember. First, a spiritual assault is an attack on authority no matter how it is packaged. Second, an assault is only successful if it gets your agreement in some way. That means being overpowered without your agreement, which may not be fun, does not transfer authority. You can't lose this way. Lastly, it can be done. The Holy Spirit has been given to us for this very reason. Jesus took on the role of a man with the Holy Spirit and demonstrated to us that it can be done. Jesus accomplished it on our terms - as a man. His victory is our victory. He is our potential. He is our future. Amen.

Notes

For Questions or Comments please respond to [lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com](mailto:lostandfoundcenter@yahoo.com) and visit [www.lostandfoundcenter.org](http://www.lostandfoundcenter.org) for additional information.

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